

After Delhi detects first Omicron case, minister bats for international flights ban

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The Delhi health minister said banning international flights is the most effective way to contain the spread of the Omicron variant.

Jain said that there is a 99 percent chance that the mask can 'save people from all COVID-19 variants, be it Alpha, Beta, Delta or Omicron.

Satyendar Jain, the Delhi health minister, on Sunday, urged the Modi government at the Centre to ban international flights, as the national capital recorded its first case of the Omicron variant.

Earlier in the day, a 37-year-old man who arrived in Delhi from Tanzania tested positive for Omicron, making it the first case of the new Covid-19 variant in Delhi and the fifth in the country.

The patient, currently admitted to the Lok Nayak Jai Prakash (LNJP) Hospital, has mild symptoms, hospital officials said.

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, on Tuesday, 30 November, had asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to consider stopping international flights, saying the city gets affected the most.

"Many countries have stopped incoming flights from Omicron-affected countries. Why are we not following their suit? In the first wave also, we had taken time to stop foreign flights," Kejriwal had said in a tweet, adding that most of the foreign flights come to Delhi.

The Delhi health minister said banning international flights is the most effective way to contain the spread of the Omicron variant.

"It is being reported that the gestational period in case of Omicron could be more than other variants. This means an infected person may go undetected at the airport... All the cases have come from affected foreign countries. The central government should take it seriously," he said.

Jain said that there is a 99 percent chance that the mask can "save people from all COVID-19 variants, be it Alpha, Beta, Delta or Omicron".

All Covid-positive international travellers are being admitted to the LNJP Hospital, where a dedicated ward has been set up for isolating and treating them

"Experts have been saying that the third wave of COVID-19 can hit the country in January-February. It can be prevented if everybody wears a mask," he said.

The minister said more than 90 percent of the eligible population has got the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Sixty percent of the people have got the second dose. "We appeal to the remaining people to get vaccinated as soon as possible," he said.

Jain said more than one lakh people are being vaccinated against Covid-19 in Delhi every day. "If we continue at the same speed, everyone will be covered soon."

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Jain also pointed out that many people are yet to receive their second dose of Covishield owing to the large gap of 84 days, as designated by the government, between the doses.

In response to a question on a booster dose, the minister said the city government will follow the notification of the central government and the recommendations of experts.